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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 NAIROBI 001261

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: WORST COMBAT IN FIVE YEARS PUT AT USG
DOORSTEP

REF: A) NAIROBI 840, B) TD-314/12191-06, C) TD-314/19524-06

CLASSIFIED BY A/DCM Michael J. Fitzpatrick. REASONS 1.4
(A,B,C,D)

SUMMARY

1. (S) A broad array of post's Somali and the international community contacts see the heavy recent fighting in Mogadishu between an Alliance to Combat Terror and Jihadist-linked militias as being at least USG-financed, perhaps USG-instigated. This broad consensus -- across clan and political tendencies -- sees the conflict fundamentally as a feud among segments of the large Hawiye clan, with an overlay of "G-WOT vs. Jihad." Somalis tell us the court and clan militias of the Ayr (the sub-clan most clearly associated with the Islamists) are well placed to defeat their clan rivals in what they see as the inevitable next round of fighting. Armed businessmen and militia leaders with the Alliance against the Islamists may be forced to realign along traditional clan lines, to the benefit of the Islamists. The latter's Jihadist goals are boosted by the clarion call for the faithful to "Rally to Destroy the U.S.-Backed Anti-Islam Alliance!" UN, EU and NGO sentiment against U.S. actions is moving into the public arena. END SUMMARY.

2. (S) Post provides following reporting and political analysis drawn from several weeks of intense contact work among a broad cross-section of sources across the Somali political, clan, and religious communities present in Nairobi. Elements are also drawn from (at times confrontational) meetings with members of the international community specializing in Somali affairs. The discussion reflects the considerable misgivings of many of these contacts regarding the Alliance against International Terrorism, announced in Mogadishu January 18, and crystallized via the February 18-21 fighting in Mogadishu -- the worst combat seen there in perhaps five years.

3. (S) Post stresses the following reflects the theories, concerns and perceptions expressed within the broad international community -- not a description of what has (or has not) happened in Mogadishu. We believe it is critical

that Washington agencies be clearly aware of the impact of recent events on the international community working in Somalia.

WHAT MOTIVATED QANYARE?

14. (S) Members of the international community are scratching their heads at a central question: Why did Warlord/MP/Minister for National Security Mohamed Qanyare Afrah suddenly come out so strongly as the central figure in the Alliance to Combat Terror (ref A)? And why now? The most popular theory expressed by Somalis (including those from the Qanyare's own Murosade sub-clan of the Hawiye) is that while he felt strong enough to mount a military challenge against the Haber Gedir Ayr (another sub-clan of the Hawiye with which he has had a grudge for nearly a decade) he did not in fact choose the timing of the fight. The prominence of Jihadi or Islamist extremists within the Ayr gave Qanyare his cover to sort out his differences using his current military strength. His allies were also well-armed, and purportedly committed to a fight against Islamist extremism. (NOTE: We are unable to determine who -- or which side, the extremists or the "RPFAT" alliance" initiated the fighting on 17-18 February. See also ref B. END NOTE.)

15. (S) Somalia Watcher's sources speculate that Qanyare's actions may also have been linked to his sense of being sidelined in the process leading to the convening in Baidoa of the Somali Transitional Federal Parliament's (TFP) first session inside Somalia. He is rumored to have tried to cut a deal with Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed to remove Prime Minister Ali Mohamed

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Gedi (Hawiye Abgal Warsangeli), and allow either Qanyare himself, or his designee, to take the premiership. Qanyare is also rumored to believe that his agreement with President Yusuf was sabotaged during mid-February reconciliation talks among the President, the PM, and the Speaker in Yusuf's hometown of Galkaiyo. Qanyare may have perceived that a successful move to crush the most dangerous threat to the TFIs in Mogadishu -- the Jihadi and Islamic Court militias -- would boost his standing among the Hawiye as the man with whom to be reckoned in all future divisions of power.

COULD HE WIN A CLAN WAR?

16. (S) Somalis from across the Hawiye clan spectrum who have contacted Somalia Watcher since February 18 all agree on one point: No matter what the rhetoric used by each side to attract recruits or influence allies, once the fighting started, it was a matter of 24-48 hours for it to morph into a straight intra-clan conflict pitting Qanyare's Murosade against the broader Ayr sub-clan and its Warsangeli allies. In any such conflict, Hawiye clan realities and traditional alliances would ensure that the small but powerful Murosade would not achieve unilateral control over Mogadishu. Haber Gedir pride alone would have guaranteed a fierce fight. No one gave the Alliance any power to glue the disparate Warsangeli, Sa'ad, Ayr, Murosade, and Da'oud participants into a fighting force that could effectively confront the broader interests of the Haber Gedir.

WHAT GAVE QANYAREQS POWER?

17. (S) Members of the international community who have contacted Somalia Watcher since February 18, deeply invested in the TFIs, have closely questioned Somalia Watcher as to the exact nature of USG support to non-traditional partners in the global war on terror in Somalia. Questions have been direct: Did the USG finance, encourage, or incite Qanyare, his Ayr ally Abdi Wa'al, Warsangeli businessman Bashir Raghe Shirar, and others to begin open combat against Jihadi militias in the capital? They claim this has been the rallying cry of the Jihadist elements among the Ayr in

Mogadishu, their propaganda theme being "Join Jihad Against the U.S.-Backed Alliance against Islam". UN Department for Security and Safety (UN DSS) staff, briefing a February 21 meeting of donors on preparations for the parliamentary session in Baidoa, stated (with no supporting evidence) that the new Mogadishu Alliance is receiving financial and material support from "major members of the international community". Several journalists and NGO contacts have also spoken to PolCouns in detail of what they term an "open secret in Mogadishu" as to direct USG assistance to certain

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warlords.

CONFUSION REGARDING
U.S. INTERESTS

¶8. (S) Somali Watcher's contacts from a range of civil society groups have sought out Somalia Watcher with the same kinds of questions and perceptions. Somali Civil Society activists (from both sides of the former Jowhar/Mogadishu-based TFI factions; and from the Murosade, Warsangeli, Ayr, Sa'ad, and Suleiman sub-clans of the Hawiye) have been particularly eloquent in their requests that the USG temper what they perceive as its role in the current conflict. They point to a broad base of positive support for the U.S. throughout Mogadishu civil society that had grown from the USG positions expressed over the course of the political stalemate in 2005. They state that if the USG does not see the current conflict as supporting USG interests in the Horn of Africa, the USG should make it publicly clear that we repudiate the actions of those widely seen as our proxies.

INTERNATIONALS GOING
PUBLIC WITH CONCERNS

¶9. (S) While most internationals have kept their concerns in diplomatic channels thus far, that is not going to remain

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true for much longer. Some individual EU member states, having concluded that the U.S. is supporting individual warlords as a means to prosecute the GWOT, tell us they are concerned that such actions now may set back both CT and democratization objectives in Somalia. The draft text of the EU's forthcoming "Annual Operational Review of the Cooperation between the People of Somalia and the European Community in 2005" -- a public document -- states "There are worrying signs that the general population -- riled by overt support of the United States for the warlords -- is increasingly rallying to the cause of the jihadis."

¶10. (S) The United States will figure prominently in the next semi-annual report to the Security Council of the UN Monitoring Group (MG) on Somalia. The MG's March 9 biweekly Report of Activities begins "Clandestine third country support in Somalia was conspicuous during the current reporting period... financial support was being provided to help organize and structure a military-style counter terrorism alliance." MG members told Somalia Watcher on March 17 that their semi-annual report -- a public document -- would name the United States explicitly as the "third country" providing clandestine support. The MG will send by March 24 a "due process" letter to US Mission UN, providing the exact language of the section on USG activities, and inviting comment. MG members made clear that the description of USG activities contain sufficient specific elements for the Security Council to determine that the United States is in violation of the Somalia arms embargo as set out in UNSCR 733 et seq, binding on all member states. The final draft of the semi-annual report will go forward for translation on or about April 3 -- with or without USG comment.

¶11. (S) Monitoring Group members were at pains to stress that they wanted to be as cooperative as possible with the

USG on the issue. Nonetheless, they made clear that they could not ignore the preponderance of information they have received supporting a conclusion of USG violation of the arms embargo. The pointed out that their report would be extremely detailed on a number of other subjects, particularly the interface among Islamist extremists, Somali clans, and powerful Somali business cartels, and would give a full picture of the supply line for arms to the Islamists. That said, they believed that their short paragraph on the United States would attract considerable attention, and wanted to ensure the USG was adequately forewarned.

COMMENTS

¶12. (S) COMMENT: In the words of February PCC on Somalia (and, post understands, subsequently confirmed by the DC): "The primary U.S. interest in Somalia is counter-terrorism, but effective governance is required to address longer-term U.S. counter-terrorism objectives." Therein lies the conundrum. The perceptions surrounding this episode have undermined our ability to maintain even the appearance of unity of purpose with significant parts of the TFIs and Somalia-oriented internationals. They view re-establishment of governance as the pre-condition for effective CT -- and the U.S. view has it the other way around.

¶13. (S) COMMENT (Cont.): These differences in approach can no longer be papered over. We are currently seen by a broad range of Nairobi-based colleagues (among Somalia experts in the bilateral embassies, UN agencies, and multilateral entities including the AU and League of Arab States) as associated with the instigation of an ill-conceived clan war in pursuit of a narrow (even if urgent) interest in destroying a Jihadi cell within the Haber Gedir Ayr. The perception -- fact-based or not -- is that the resulting bloody conflict jeopardizes the survival of the TFIs and has left large parts of Mogadishu in control of the very Jihadis we are accused of seeking to eliminate. Somalia experts are quick to express their assessment that the very structure of the Alliance is inimical to the Somali clan context. (NOTE: The Islamic Courts involved in the fighting are also clan-

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based; see ref C. END NOTE.) Based on their assumption that the USG encouraged the formation of the Alliance, these Operts ask whether the USG is fully aware of the broader implications, including for our own interests, of the most recent fighting. END COMMENT.
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